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You should be able to tell somebody your premise in a couple of sentences. If you don't know what you're talking about, no one else will either. —*Shonda Rhimes*

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CHAPTER RECAP

As you begin developing your idea, you should know the difference between an idea and a premise. Shonda shares this example from *Grey's Anatomy*:

- *An idea*: I want to do a show about surgical interns.
- *A premise*: This is a show about female surgical interns, at the center of which is Meredith Grey. The story focuses on their friendship, competition, and the idea of living up to their potential.

A premise is essentially your idea fleshed out and specified, and clearly details your vision for the show. You should be able to state it in a few sentences and have another person fully understand exactly what your show is about.

There are a lot of decisions that need to be made when you are developing the premise of your show, including how the story will be structured and told in every episode. For Shonda, everything is driven by the characters. Once you have an understanding of the characters you're writing, and their journeys in the show, finding a structure becomes much easier.

Take advantage of the time you have now to really think through your concept and come up with viable episode ideas in your story bible. And finally, don't become too obsessed with show titles or character names; ultimately, what's important is being able to tell a good story.

SUBCHAPTERS

- ▶ An Idea vs. a Premise
- ▶ Let the Story Inform the Structure
- ▶ Decide the Tone of Your Show
- ▶ Be Thoughtful With Your Story Bible
- ▶ Don't Get Hung Up on Titles or Names

NOTES

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Download Shonda's original story bible for *Grey's Anatomy*, which she has provided to her MasterClass students. Pay attention to the detailed way Shonda describes the story of the show, and how easily you can visualize it on screen.

ASSIGNMENT

- ▶ Choose one of the ideas from the list you created for your assignment in Chapter 3. Begin to develop it into a fully fleshed out show premise. Who are the characters at the heart of your story? What is their journey? What is the best episode structure to effectively tell their stories?
- ▶ Finally, begin to write the story bible for your show, using Shonda's bible for *Grey's Anatomy* as a template and guide. Write a page describing your concept and create a character list. Sketch out initial episode ideas.

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